

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00
EB-08 FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 SP-02 STR-07 TRSE-00
LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGRE-00 L-03 /071 W
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R 131907Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8715
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
USMISSION GENEVA

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USEEC

PASS AGRICULTURE ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAYANS/SINDELAR
PARIS ALSO FOR USOECD
GENEVA ALSO FOR USMTN

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, EEC
SUBJ: EC PROPOSAL ON THIABENDAZOLE FOR CITRUS FRUIT

REF: ECA-114

1. SUMMARY: COMMISSION IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE PROPOSAL
AUTHORIZING USE OF THIABENDAZOLE ON CITRUS FRUIT AT 6PPM
RESIDUE LEVEL. COMMISSION SAYS THAT CURRENT EVIDENCE
DOES NOT SUBSTANTIATE INCREASE TO 10PPM AS REQUESTED BY
CITRUS TRADE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE COMMISSION IS REPORTEDLY IN THE FINAL STAGES OF
APPROVING A PROPOSAL TO THE COUNCIL (AS THE 14TH AMEND-
MENT TO THE BASIC EC DIRECTIVE ON PRESERVATIVES) WHICH
WOULD PERMANENTLY AUTHORIZE THE USE OF THIABENDAZOLE (TBZ)
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ON CITRUS FRUIT AT THE MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVEL OF 6PPM.
(THE PROPOSAL WOULD ALSO PERMANENTLY ESTABLISH THE MAXI-
MUM LEVEL FOR BANANAS AT 3PPM.) TBZ WAS FIRST APPROVED
FOR USE ON CITRUS FRUIT (AND BANANAS) TRADED WITHIN THE
COMMUNITY ON A TEMPORARY BASIS IN 1971. THE CURRENT
TEMPORARY AUTHORIZATION IS SET TO EXPIRE ON JANUARY 1,
1979.

3. THE CITRUS INDUSTRIES OF THE U.S., ISRAEL, AND SOUTH AFRICA HAVE LOBBIED STRONGLY AT COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATE LEVELS FOR THE CONTINUED USE OF TBZ ON FRESH CITRUS AND FOR AN INCREASE IN THE PERMISSIBLE MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVEL FROM 6 TO 10PPM - THIS IS IN LINE WITH THE LEVEL ESTABLISHED BY CODEX ALIMENTARIUS AND THE U.S. THE INCREASE TO 10PPM IS JUSTIFIED, IN THE INDUSTRY VIEW, IN ORDER TO COMBAT VARYING AND IN SOME CASES INCREASED RESISTANCE OF CITRUS FUNGI TO TBZ. TBZ IS CURRENTLY APPLIED PRIOR TO SHIPMENTS AS A FUNGICIDAL AGENT FOR THE CONTROL OF DECAY, SOILAGE AND SPORULATION ON FRESH CITRUS FRUIT.

4. THE INDUSTRY CONTENDS THAT WHILE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION MUST BE GIVEN TO CONSUMER SAFETY, ONE MUST ALSO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE NECESSARY TO PERMIT EFFECTIVE USE OF TBZ AS A FUNGICIDAL AGENT FOR CITRUS. IN THIS RESPECT, THE INDUSTRY POINTS TO THE RECENT RECOMMENDATION BY THE JOINT MEETING OF FAO/WHO EXPERTS ON PESTICIDE RESIDUES TO INCREASE THE ACCEPTABLE INTAKE (ADI FROM 0.05 TO A LEVEL OF 0.3 MG OF TBZ PER KG OF BODY WT.

5. THE DECISION TO RETAIN TBZ RESIDUE LEVELS FOR CITRUS AT 6PPM, ACCORDING TO COMMISSION OFFICIAL HAIGE, IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHARGE OF TBZ FILE, WAS BASED ON HIS DETERMINATION THAT A REQUEST FOR AN INCREASE TO 10PPM AT THIS TIME WOULD BE REJECTED OUT OF HAND BY SOME MEMBER STATES. HE SAID THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE FOR FOOD (SCF) REMAIN SKEPTICAL OF THE NEED FOR SUCH AN INCREASE FROM BOTH THE TECHNICAL AND HUMAN HEALTH STANDPOINT. FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW, THIS POSITION IS SUPPORTED BY AN EARLIER COMMUNITY SURVEY OF IMPORTED CITRUS WHICH SHOWED TBZ RESIDUE LEVELS AVERAGING AROUND 2-3PPM - FAR BELOW LEVELS THAT COULD BE EXPECTED, THEY ARGUE, IF THE CITRUS TRADE WAS IN FACT PUSHING THE UPPER LIMIT OF CURRENTLY PERMITTED LEVELS.

6. FROM THE RESISTANCE ANGLE, SOME MEMBERS OF SCF HAVE APPARENTLY VOICED CONCERN ABOUT THE ADVISIBILITY OF USING ANY CHEMICAL FOR TREATMENT OF FOOD PRODUCTS WHICH CURRENTLY ALSO HAVE APPLICATIONS, AS TBZ DOES, IN HUMAN AND/OR VETERINARY MEDICINE. THE CONCERN IS THAT HARMFUL ORGANISMS NOW CONTROLLABLE BY TBZ COULD BECOME RESISTANT AFTER LONG PERIODS OF EXPOSURE TO VERY LOW LEVELS OF TBZ FROM OTHER SOURCES (E.G., RESIDUES ON FRUITS AND VEGETABLES OR IN ANIMAL PRODUCTS). IN THE VIEW OF SOME SCF

MEMBERS THEREFORE, THE INDUSTRY REQUEST FOR AN INCREASE IN THE TBZ MAXIMUM RESIDUE TOLERANCE LEVEL TO COUNTER INCREASED RESISTANCE OF SOME CITRUS FUNGI IS FURTHER PROOF OF THEIR POINT.

7. GIVEN THE CURRENT FEELING AMONG SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE SCF, AND THE LACK OF SUFFICIENTLY CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT AN INCREASE, HAIGE BELIEVES THAT THE DRAFT PROPOSAL WILL BE APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE COUNCIL BEFORE THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

8. WHILE THE DRAFT COMMISSION PROPOSAL ITSELF MAKES NO ATTEMPT TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS CONCERNING TBZ, SUCH AS THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING ITS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CLASSIFICATION AS A PRESERVATIVE RATHER THAN AS A PESTICIDE AND THE REQUIRED LABELLING OF TREATED CITRUS AT RETAIL, THE EXPLANATORY NOTE ACCOMPANYING THE COMMISSION DRAFT DOES ADDRESS THE ISSUE. IT NOTES, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE COMMISSION IS AWARE OF THE TECHNO-

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 BRUSSELS 17385

USEEC

PASS AGRIC ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAYANS/SINDELAR
PARIS ALSO FOR USOECD, GENEVA ALSO FOR USMTN

LOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF HAVING SEVERAL AUTHORIZED TREAT-
MENT AGENTS IN THE CASE OF CITRUS FRUIT AND BANANAS
BECAUSE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE DIFFERENCES IN THE SPECTRUM
OF ACTIVITY. IT ALSO NOTES THAT THE COMMISSION IS
CONTINUING TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF PROPOSING A
COMPREHENSIVE DIRECTIVE ON FRUIT TREATMENT AGENTS FOLLOW-
ING FURTHER CONSULTATIONS, AND THAT IN THE MEANTIME, THEY
WILL SUGGEST NO OTHER AMENDMENTS TO THE DIRECTIVE ON
PRESERVATIVES CONCERNING THE USE OF OTHER FUNGICIDES SUCH
AS BIPHENYL, ORTHOPHENYLPHENOL, AND SODIUM ORTHOPHENYL-
PHENATE. HINTON

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